# Philatelic Society of Trinidad & Tobago

(Founded May 1942)

P.O. Box 596, Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.

**Bulletin**

Meetings: Second Wednesday of every month, 6:00 - 7:30pm
St. Mary's College, Frederick St., Port of Spain

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PUBLISHED QUARTERLY JANUARY - MARCH 2018 VOL. 8 BULLETIN #280


## CENSORED MAIL FROM US FORCES IN TRINIDAD.

*By Edward Barrow.*

When the US established bases here in Trinidad, they also set up post offices to handle mail from their servicemen and women. These post offices were considered to be part of the US mail system and used US stamps on their mail. Each base was usually assigned an APO number, (APO is short for Army or Air Force Post Office). In Trinidad's case there were a number of APO's in operation. The envelopes below show two: APO 803, which was assigned to Fort Read (initially at the dockside camp in Port of Spain, later at Cumuto) and APO 687, assigned to Edinburgh Field (now a suburb of Chaguanas).

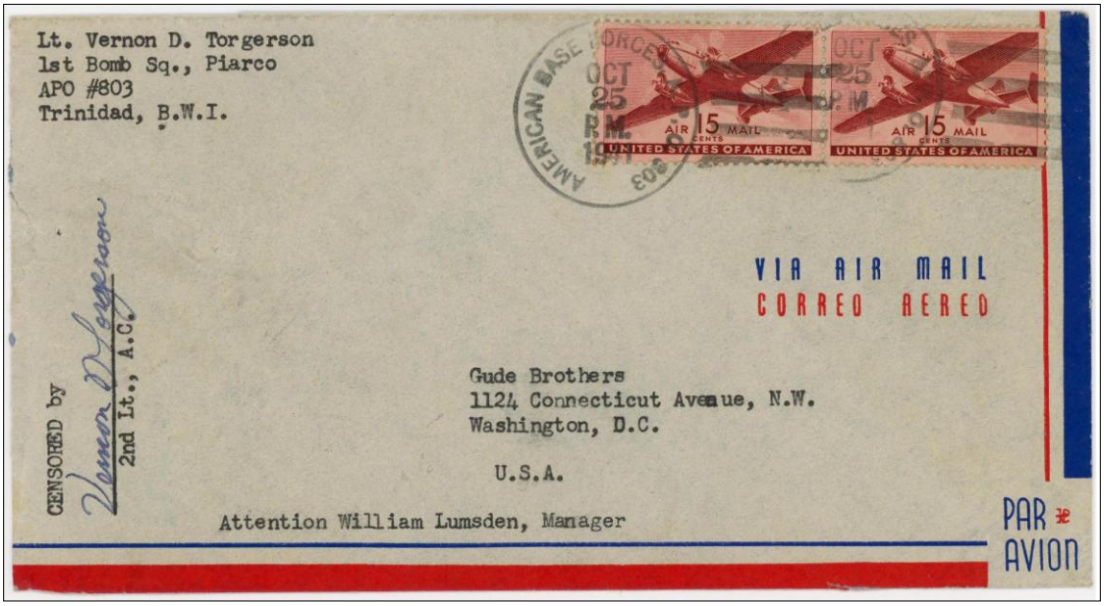



*Fig. 1: Envelope sent from APO 803 with Trinidad in the return address.*

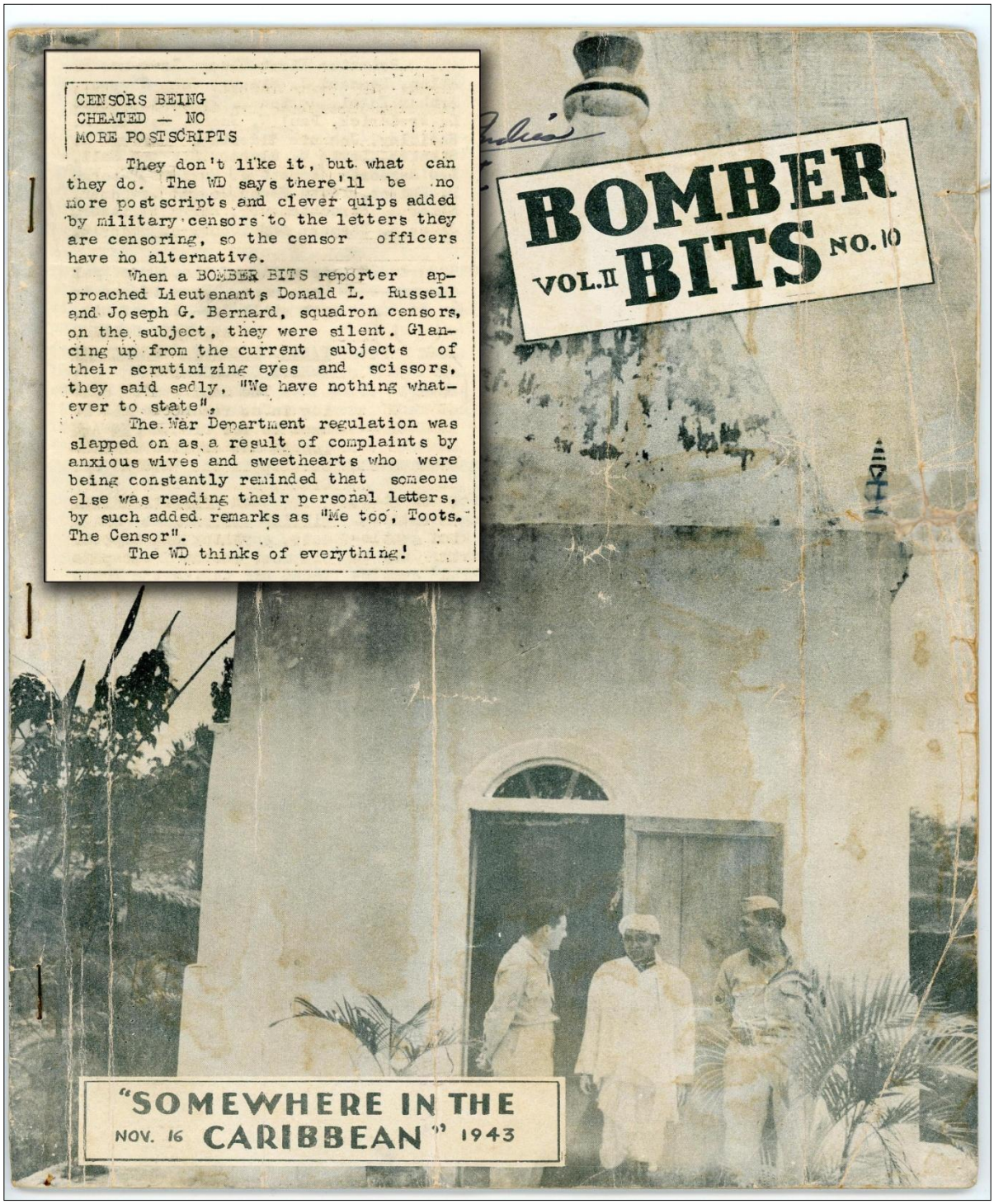



*Fig.2: Bomber Bits was a locally published magazine for the US personnel at Wallerfield Airforce Base, Trinidad. On the cover it tries to obscure its location by saying "Somewhere in the Caribbean". The insert discusses censors adding comments to letters.*




*Fig. 3: Envelope sent from APO 687, Trinidad, but with anonymous location.*

Initially upon entering the War, US authorities did not fully assess the security risk involved in sending military mail home. Take the envelope shown in Figure 1, which was sent just over a month before the attack on Pearl Harbour, by just reading the front we can ascertain that the 1st Bomber Squadron was stationed at the RAF base at Piarco, Trinidad. If there were German spies operating in the US Post Office such important information could be gleaned by just examining the front of mail.

So it is not surprising that not long after new guidelines were drafted and implemented that sought to reduce this risk. The 1943 envelope from APO 687 in Figure 3 shows that any mention of Trinidad has been replaced by a New York designation. Censors who opened mail to check the contents were also instructed to remove mention of place names. Figure 5 (over), is taken from a handbook for servicemen in Trinidad; it warns military personnel from mentioning any vague hints as to location in their letters home. Sometimes it was the censors who took too much liberty and started inserting comments into the text of the mail they were reading. Fig 2 shows a small extract from a squadron magazine for APO 695 (Wallerfield Airforce Base) where the issue is raised. It alludes to censors inserting funny comments into the text of letters sent home such as “Me Too, Toots” and signed “The Censor”.

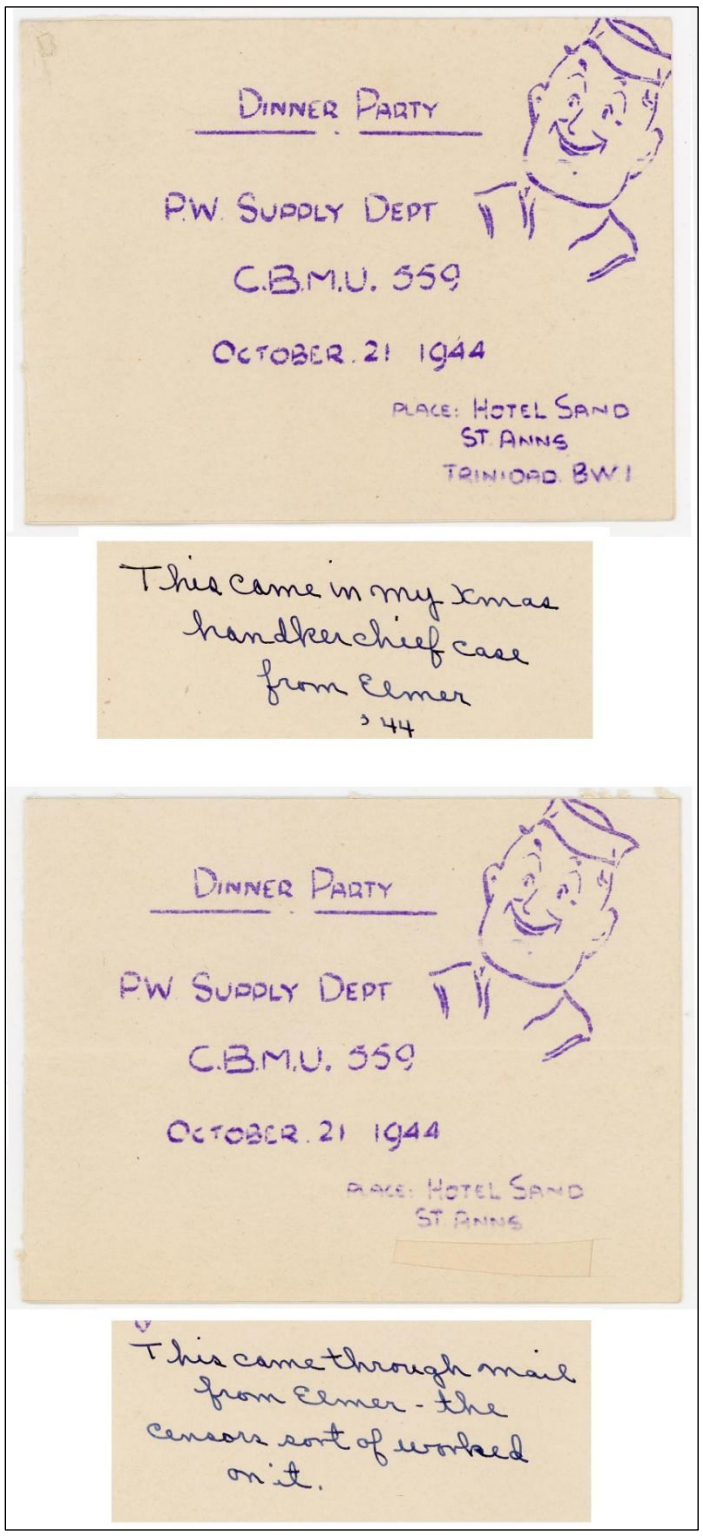



*Fig. 4: The same dinner menu sent in a parcel (top) and by regular mail (bottom). In the latter case "Trinidad" was removed by the Censors.*

CENSORSHIP

Censorship on Trinidad is a tremendous job. It requires hours of painstaking reading of every letter which leaves the Island.

In wartime censorship of your personal mail is an absolute necessity. It is a safeguard against the unwitting revelation of military information to the enemy. Considerable time and effort can be saved by careful writing. Regulations to guide and help you have been drawn up and MUST be followed:

A few are listed below:

All letters written by the military personnel must be mailed in the camp, post of station to which the soldier has been assigned and are subject to censorship by the proper authorities.

No letters will be mailed from local postoffices.

Soldiers and Officers will avoid any mention of their post, camp or station.

Army postoffice numbers should be plainly written in the upper left hand corner of the envelope.

All personnel must avoid trying to write around censorship -- that is, refrain from any vague hints as to location, station, strength, etc.

*Fig. 5: Taken from "The Soldier's Guidebook, Trinidad"*

In a case of serendipity I came across a perfect example of the censors at work. A US serviceman stationed in Trinidad sent the same printed dinner party notice via two routes: one via regular mail and one in a parcel. The dinner party was held at Hotel Sand in St. Ann's and Trinidad was included in the address, (a postcard of the Hotel is shown in Fig 6). The notice sent via regular mail has had the country name cut out, while the other sent in a parcel has not. Elmer's wife even wrote a helpful comments detailing how it was sent and what happened; "the censors sort of worked on it".




*Fig. 5: Postcard of the Hotel Sand where the dinner party was held.*

## REPORT ON THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The Annual General Meeting was held on the 14th February 2018 at St. Mary's College, Port of Spain. Present were nine members. The returning officer was Mr. Edwin Caines. The results of the election of officers are: President - Mr. John Chay; Vice-Presidents - Mr. Jazad Ali and Mr. Albert Sydney; Hon. Secretary - Mr. Robert Franco; The four Committee Members - Mr. Alan Ache, Mr. Joel McFarlane, Mr. Mark McPeanne and Mr. Selwyn Gomes; Librarian - Mr. Roger Ramoutar; Hon. Auditor - VACANT. Education Officer - Mr. Frank Ferreira and Public Relations Officer - Mr. Albert Sydney.

HON. SECRETARY: Mr. Robert Franco, 33 Verbena Road, Victoria Gardens, Diego Martin. Tel: 637-3603. General correspondence, change of address and new issue standing orders. Please make payments for the new issue standing orders payable to Robert Franco. If you have not received a bulletin, please inform Robert. His e-mail: francorobert345@gmail.com If you have any ideas for new stamp issues, please send them to Robert. Please note that the stamp programme is planned one to two years in advance.

PRESIDENT: Mr. John Chay, P.O. Box 596, P.O.S. Tel: 622-1673. Sale of accessories, i.e. Stockbooks, albums, mounts, etc. Bulletin Editor. Fax: (868) 622-2602.

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The five members of the Board of Trustees are John Chay, Albert Sydney, Robert Franco, Roger Edghill and Mark McPeanne. The board was approved by the officers present at the AGM.

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**Free world -wide stamps are available at all our monthly meetings.**